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House Approves Section 8 Housing Reform

The House this week approved reforms to the nation's largest low-income housing assistance program because there is a clear need for improvements to the Section 8 housing voucher program. The bill will ensure our most vulnerable families have a safe and decent place to live, and it will help these families on a path to long-term self-sufficiency.

The House voted 333 to 83 in favor of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. The bill provides a reliable funding formula for annual renewal of Section 8 housing vouchers, simplifies rent calculation and inspection requirements and promotes self-sufficiency on the part of assisted families through work incentives and homeownership opportunities.

Providing better opportunities for home ownership is one of the most significant reforms because it provides a needed sense of stability and security, and engenders responsibility to community.

In 1998, as part of broader housing legislation, Congress adopted a provision allowing voucher holders to use a voucher for a down payment on a home purchase. However, that bill made such use subject to appropriation in advance. This bill effectively lifts this condition, by permitting voucher funds to be used for a down payment for a first-time home purchase, as a one-time grant in an amount not exceeding \$10,000, for families who have been receiving voucher assistance for a period of at least one year.

Unlike the use of vouchers to finance annual mortgage payments, as currently permitted, use of a voucher for a down payment on a home purchase would then free up the voucher for a different family in the following year. Additionally, the bill allows for

vouchers to be used toward the full cost of purchasing manufactured homes sited on leased land, including property taxes, insurance and tenant-paid utilities. Currently, the law only permits a voucher to be used to pay the cost of leasing the land, which makes the voucher of little use for such purpose. This change should be particularly helpful in expanding affordable housing opportunities to voucher holders in rural areas.

The bill also modifies existing income targeting requirements to make it easier for working families of modest means to receive a voucher in rural areas. It also authorizes funding for 20,000 additional Section 8 vouchers each year until 2012, for a total cumulative amount of 100,000 new vouchers.

Another important aspect of the bill is the modifications to formula used to allocate Section 8 voucher funds to housing agencies. The changes will eliminate inefficiencies that resulted in \$1.4 billion in needed but unused funds. The number of housing vouchers issued has declined by 150,000 since 2004, largely because of problems with the allocation formula.

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House Passes the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act

This week, the House voted 223 to 201 in favor of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act (H.R. 2956). This was an important step toward bringing our troops home from Iraq.

At this point, it is that continued military action is not in the best interest of the United States of America, the Iraqi people or the Persian Gulf Region. As the common enemy of Sunnis, supporters of Saddam and foreign jihadists, our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency and a catalyst for violence. We have reached the point where we must turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. All Iraqis must know that Iraq is free and that the U.S. will not be an occupying force.

This war has placed a great strain on our military and their families. Some troops are on their third deployment. Recruitment is down, even as our military has lowered its standards. Defense budgets are being cut. Personnel costs

are skyrocketing, particularly in healthcare. Further strain will leave the country unprepared for the wide range of threats that exist.

The war continues to intensify. Deaths and injuries are growing, with over 3,600 confirmed American deaths and more than 25,000 serious injuries. It is estimated that over 50,000 American soldiers will suffer from battle fatigue, and there are reports of at least 30,000 Iraqi civilian deaths.

The men and women of our armed forces have done everything we've asked of them and they have accomplished all that is possible militarily in Iraq. America must continue the fight against terrorism where it exists, but the time has come to begin bringing our soldiers home. This resolution takes a stand on these important national security principles and ensures that our military continues to be a strong, capable force.



Details of H.R.2956

- Acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq is now responsible for its own future.
- Requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.
- Reiterates that the redeployment must be done in a safe and orderly way, with maximum attention paid to the protection of American forces.
- Requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008 for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them.
- The resolution names specific missions that the President must consider, but it does not require or authorize those missions.
- Requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008.

Other Important House Votes This Week

College Cost Reduction Act, H.R. 2669

- Represents the largest effort to help students and families pay for college since the 1944 G.I. Bill.
- Cuts to student loan interest rates would benefit 92,244 North Carolina students, and another 162,562 North Carolina students would benefit from a \$500 increase in Pell Grant aid.

Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007

- Reforms the interagency Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), and fixes the key failures identified in the aftermath of the Dubai Ports World scandal.

Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007, H.R. 2900

Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007, H.R. 2900

- Bipartisan bill addresses the growing concern about drug safety with the most sweeping drug safety provisions in years, creating a new FDA program to monitor the safety of drugs after they are on the market.